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California's "Gem of the Ocean"

*A Descriptive Account of a Short Cruise from Santa Barbara to the Fascinating Channel Islands, Emeralds Set in a Sapphire Pacific**

By E. McGAFFEY

SOME two hours' sail from the beautiful city of Santa Barbara lies a cluster of islands which were once a portion of a now submerged chain of mountains extending from north to south, and whose harbors at one time sheltered the early Spanish explorers of the sixteenth century. This group of islands consists of Anacapa, Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa and San Miguel islands. Irregular in shape, and showing striking contrasts in their topography, these islands present a fascinating study of variety and interest to all lovers of the beautiful and the unusual. No more thrilling or keenly interesting trip can be found along the Pacific coast for the yachtsman or the owner of the motorboat than a cruise around these islands.

Starting from Santa Barbara with a group of yachting enthusiasts, including the manager of the Automobile Club of Southern California at Santa Barbara, one of the crack golfers of the city, and one of its most noted wing shots, at daybreak of a September morning, our little schooner swung out

from the harbor to the outer waters of the Pacific, leaving behind the dull slate tints of the autumn dawn and the dimly seen spires of Santa Barbara. We glided over foamy hollows and surmounted emerald crests tipped with white crescents of shimmering foam, while from the bow rose an ivory spray churned up by the flying boat.

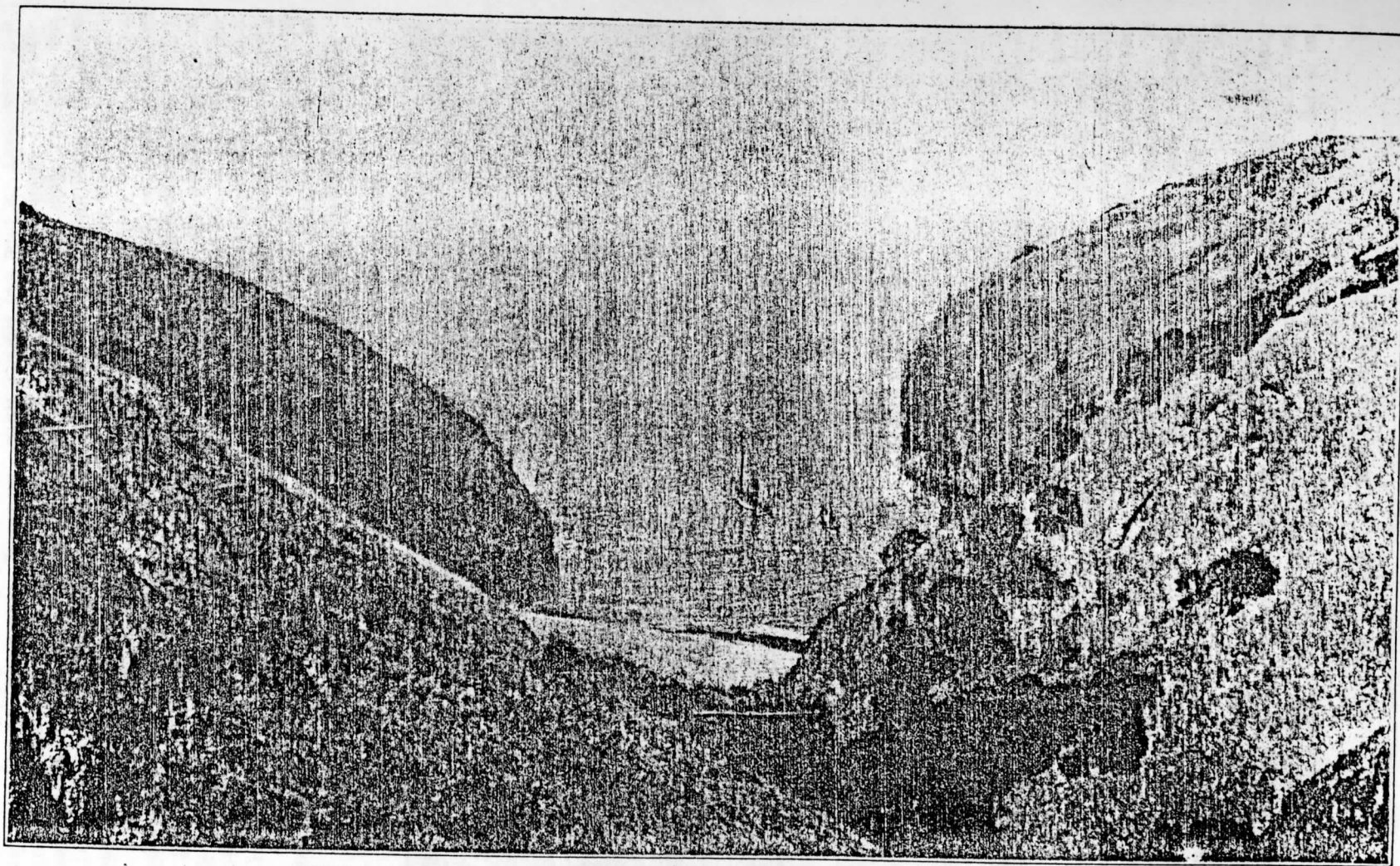
Our sails stiffened in the rising breeze, a string of wild fowl rose scatteringly from the water as we passed along, and an occasional flying fish appeared for a moment above the surface of the water, swerving awkwardly across the waves for a short distance to sink again in the sheltering waters of the sea.

As the sun came up, broad and bright above the blue waters of the Pacific, our boat fled like a swallow over the billowing depths, and for miles we headed directly to the west, the increasing force of the wind flattening our sails out as hard as steel.

"Land Ho!"

At last the long, low, rakish outline of towering hills rose from the westward, looming from a veil of leaden seas, and a cry of "Land Ho!" gladdened the hearts of

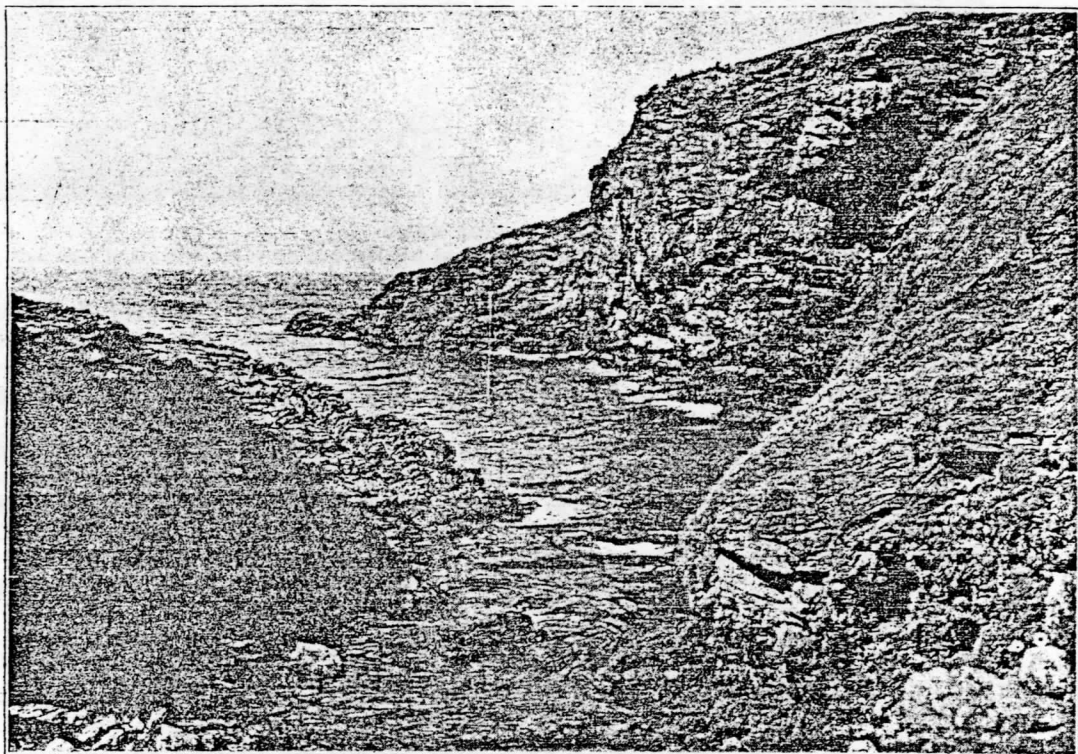
*Photographs through courtesy of the Santa Barbara Chamber of Commerce. This article originally appeared in Yachting Monthly, London, England.



FRYES HARBOR, ONE OF THE PICTURESQUE HAVENS IN THE PACIFIC CHANNEL ISLANDS
Rock from both sides of the harbor is being used in the erection of the breakwater at Santa Barbara

"us roving explorers." Running easily before the wind, we turned south, tacked, came about, and glided into a sheltering harbor which curved in a projecting indentation in the shoreline. We were at Santa Cruz Island, the island of the Sacred Cross—"Treasure Island"—only its riches consist of a bewildering beauty of sea-enclosed caves, harbors, rocky nooks, cañons, hills, streams and wooded heights which make of it more an enchanted isle than a land of mere reality.

It was a strange and fascinating underworld of vivid color and teeming life. Long filaments of ribbon kelp waved and brooded in the surrounding waters, and the broad leaves of their foliage dilated, closed and unclosed, while, in and out of the maze, starfish would be seen, and the jade-green recesses were lit at intervals with the graceful forms of golden perch, or angelfish, swimming leisurely through the veiled and vaguely outlined aisles of this mystic ocean garden.

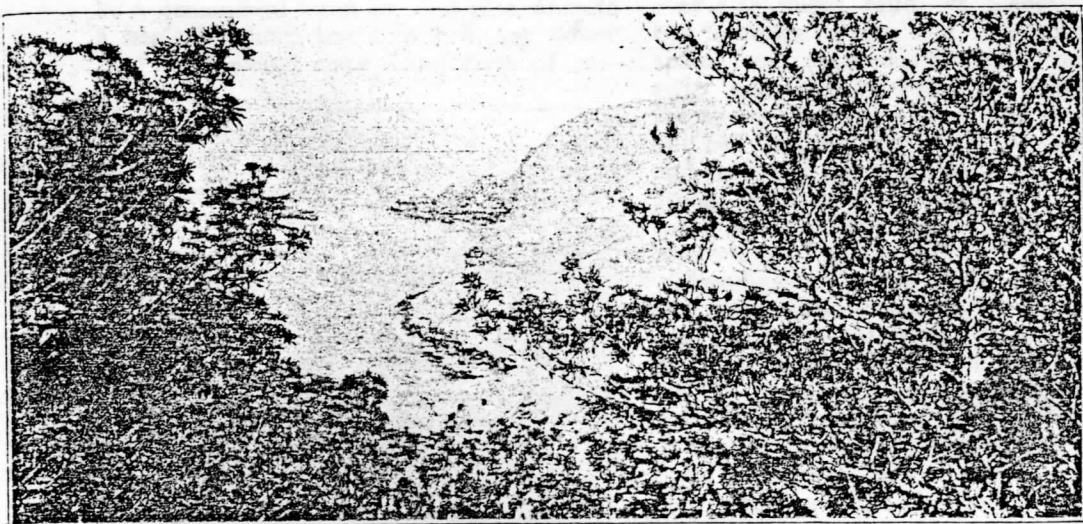


RUGGED CHARACTER OF THE ISLAND NEAR VALDEZ HARBOR

Hauling the dinghy alongside, a number of the party clambered into it and turned its bow toward the entrance of Big Painted Cave, which opened cavernously into the very core of the island. The schooner meanwhile stood out to sea with all sail set. We rowed and steered above beds of shining kelp, where orange-colored fishes gleamed and glistened amid the open spaces of this submerged maritime forest of waving green fronds. The waters here were as placid as a mirror and shone like emerald in the basking sunlight. Kelp perch and rock cod moved lazily about among their shadows, and occasionally the lithe and sinister form of a leopard shark darted swiftly from his ambush among the clustering masses of undulating seaweed.

Big Painted Cave

Presently our boat neared and floated into the cathedral-like entrance of Big Painted Cave. Here we found one of the Supreme Architect's most colossal edifices, wrought by the hands of fire and flood, before whose majesty the dome of St. Peter's Cathedral and its man-made pillars faded into insignificance. Galleries and arches of curved and rudely fashioned grandeur unfolded before us, hewn by the action of primeval flame, and moulded in the later centuries by the plastic touch of intruding tidewaters. And these shapes, tinted and decorated brilliantly with flaring yellows, reds, ochres and magentas, with scattered splashes of green, brown and



ARCH ROCK

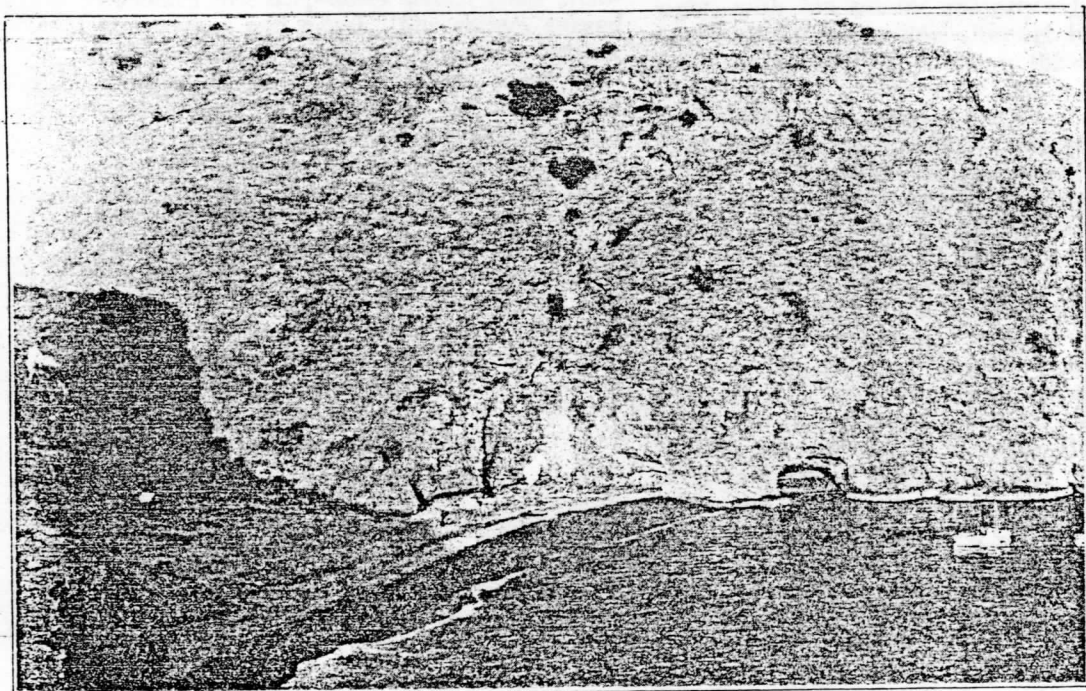
The trees in the foreground are ironwood, not found on the mainland but indigenous to the island

white, unrolled, panorama-like, in a mighty rock-colored interior, a temple of the gods, sculptured and formed by the strong hands of volcanic eruption and the following erosion of wind and wave.

At first, as we drifted in, the sunshine still hovered about the high-arched gateway, and silence was our sole greeting as the boat, responding to the dipping oars, pushed forward into the shades ahead. But we were soon swallowed up in densest

gloom, and among the jagged balustrades and through the winding labyrinths that pierced miles into the island's center came an organ-roll of weird, mysterious chanting of prisoned waters, creeping in and out of narrow channels, feeling their way along bars of volcanic rock and beating watery wings against their unyielding barriers.

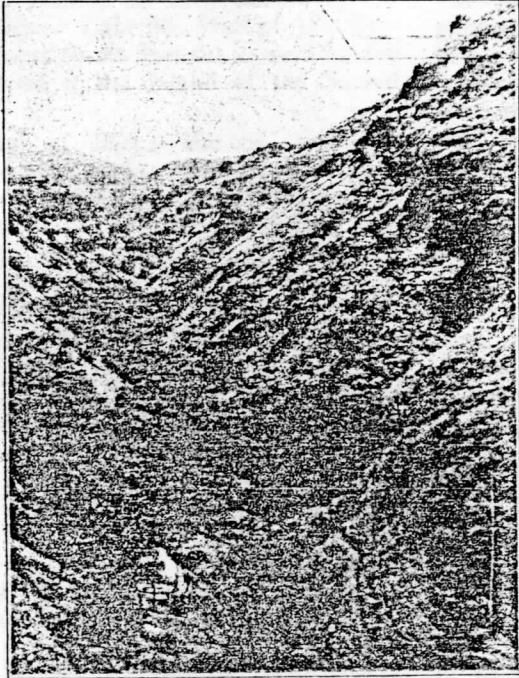
It was a mournful yet a thrilling chorus. At times the sounds rose into a wail almost of banished spirits, and again there would



CUEVA VALDEZ HARBOR

One can land in the cave at any tide. Another entrance goes clear through to the right

be a demoniacal burst of wild glee, akin to a hag's laughter, heard in hell, far down. And then would come from frets of ser-



RUGGED MAGNIFICENCE

This scene is typical of all the canyons opening toward the mainland

rated rock and time-worn galleries low melodies like harp-notes struck from trembling wires and sweet. The waters surged and moaned in some of the more remote crevices as though seeking for some wandering mate imprisoned in the convoluted and seemingly interminable passages, and now and again the hoarse bark of a sea lion added to the mingled clamor. The inky dusk which enveloped us lent the last touch of the unearthly to this subterranean grotto. As we emerged at last, a pair of pigeon guillemots swung into the opening and disappeared into the yawning vault beyond, and miles out the schooner hung framed in the crescent of the overlapping entrance to the cave.

Incomparable Beauty

She was tacking under full sail to pick us up. Nothing at sea begins to compare in beauty with a ship or schooner with all sails spread, sailing before a stiff breeze. Our craft, with every inch of canvas stretched taut in the rising wind, came in like some snowy swan on outspread pinions, and her graceful lines, etched clean on a horizon of turquoise blue, made a picture of verve and action to live long in a man's memory, what-

ever else might fade. It seemed scarcely two minutes before she had covered the space from outer sea to inner harbor, so swift was her movement, so bird-like was the sweep of her canvas wings. We rowed out and boarded her as she brought about, and this was accomplished without anyone going overboard, although in the choppy sea it was just exciting enough to lend the feat a tang of adventure.

Standing out to sea again we tacked and swung alongshore, passing Pelican Rock in our course. Here hundreds of these ungainly fowl, brown-winged and long-billed, looking for all the world like giant woodcock when in flight, perched on rocky pinnacles or took wing as the schooner came by. These latter birds curved high above their bare and shelving roosting place, to take their stand once more with their more phlegmatic mates when we were past. A bald eagle, far up on shoreward heights, rose heavily from a lone rock and flew to a higher vantage point as the boat rounded a ledge, and royal terns, albatrosses, cormorants, gulls, puffins, murrelets and pigeon guillemots sat on the stony cliff edges or skimmed across the water as we went on our way. Close in shore at one beach we heard the tremulous and liquid note of a meadow lark and saw a pair of mourning doves, with their rapid and level wing beats, flash past above the manzanita thickets.

Rounding a turn, Mount Diablo came in sight, with his satanic majesty's head and horns plainly discernible, although his cloven hoofs were doubtless hidden in the enormous rock that formed his body and which was sunk deep in the waves of the Pacific. Santa Cruz Island is some twenty-eight miles long, with an average width of seven miles, and is incomparably the flower of the Santa Barbara Channel group. Its loftiest peak at the east rises to a height of one thousand feet, and its highest altitude to the west is over fifteen hundred feet. It is a rugged and well wooded expanse, cut into with many canyons of exceeding beauty, fringed with thickets of manzanita, with scattered trees and small groves of sycamore, cottonwood, elder, wild cherry and sumach. The upper slopes and crests are dotted with pines and oak trees, while the manzanita reaches down to the very borders of the beetling cliffs.

Discovered By Cabrillo

Many millions of centuries ago all of these islands were a part of the mainland mountain ranges, now rising along the coast, the channels between them even now being comparatively shallow and abounding in

game fish of various kinds. Three hundred and eighty years ago the sails of a Spanish caravel were furled in one of the harbors of Santa Cruz Island, till then unnamed, and Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, first of the Castilian explorers to set feet on its soil, landed and christened it the Island of the Sacred Cross.

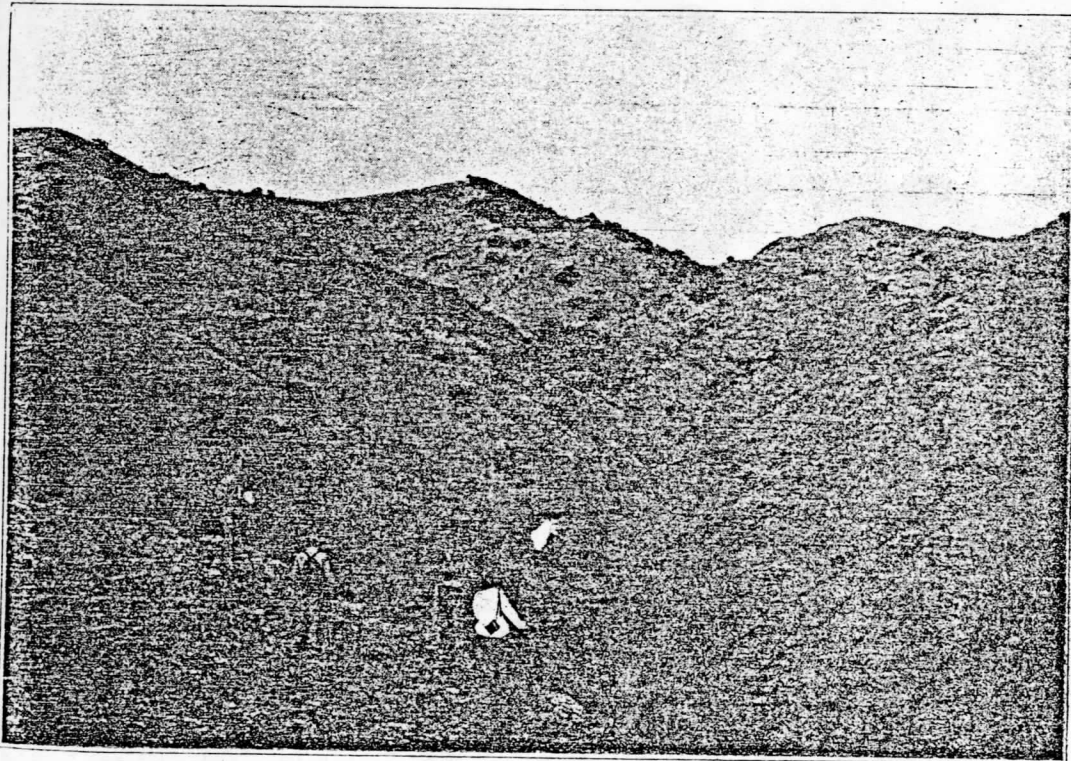
Anchoring at Dicks Harbor, we slept soundly the next night, having passed most of the day in fishing and gathering mussels from rocks which studded the harbor, with their rough outlines showing above the tides near the entrance to the harbor. The next morning we explored the cañon extending up from the harbor, and found it to be a scene of rare and wild beauty.

Returning to the boat, we sailed around San Miguel Island, where at the west end we saw scores of seals basking on the rocks, squirming and barking, and from time to time sliding into the ocean waters. At Anacapa Island we passed a boat at anchor, and circling back we rounded the west shores and turned north as the shades of twilight gave warning of impending night-fall.

The sun's rim dipped, the stars rushed out; at one stride came the dark. The bow of our boat ploughed through the water,

now as shining and smooth as a ballroom floor. On each side the phosphorescent gleam of glittering waters surrounded the schooner, and shoals of fish jumping and playing in the maze made the depths look like a seething cauldron of yellowish flame. Suddenly a great shark, sinuous and shadowy, came following in the wake of the boat, his ponderous bulk, lithe and menacing, sliding with graceful curves through the glimmering brine in which he was encased. It was a picture of intense and absorbing interest.

Tacking sharply to port, the helmsman brought us in again to Pelican Bay, and soon the rattling of chains and the orders of the skipper were heard as we "bedded down for the night." Overheard, and beyond, the pine-clad heights stood clear in the illumination of moon and stars, and the lull of a sleepy tide broke softly on the masked and murmuring sands. Rolled in a double blanket, my bunk on the upper deck was as supple as a hammock, but it was long before I could bring myself to sleep, with such a glorious night around me. Dawn broke in a kaleidoscopic burst of vivid color, sea, sky and land a veritable dream of unchallenged loveliness. It was dazzling as



GENERAL TOPOGRAPHY BACK FROM THE MAINLAND
The man second from the right is aiming at a wild boar